

On the anniversary of Professor, Dr. Sci. Valentina G. Kuznetsova, Editor-in-Chief of the journal “Comparative Cytogenetics”

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Abstract

The article is dedicated to the anniversary of Professor, Dr. Sci. Valentina G. Kuznetsova, Editor-in-Chief and co-founder of the journal “Comparative Cytogenetics”. V. Kuznetsova is the principal researcher at the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Head of the Department of Karyosystematics. Under her leadership, many Russian and foreign cytogeneticists have successfully defended their dissertations. Today, Valentina Kuznetsova is one of the world’s leading experts in the field of comparative cytogenetics and karyosystematics of insects. The list of her publications includes 200 scientific articles, chapters in books and collective monographs.

Keywords

Bibliography, biography, biology, classical and molecular cytogenetics, evolution, Insecta, holokinetic chromosomes, karyosystematics

On January 29, 2026, Valentina G. Kuznetsova, Professor, Doctor of Biological Sciences, Principal Researcher at the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Head of the Department of Karyosystematics at the Laboratory of Insect Systematics, Editor-in-Chief and co-founder of the journal “*Comparative Cytogenetics*”, turns 85 years old.

Valentina Kuznetsova (Fig. 1) is one of the world’s leading experts in the field of insect cytogenetics and karyosystematics. She was born in Vladivostok (Far East of Russia) in the family of a scientist-biologist and a military engineer. In 1946, the family returned to their native Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg), where Valentina enrolled in a school, from which she graduated with a silver medal. In 1958, she entered the Biology and Soil Science Faculty of Leningrad State University (now St. Petersburg State University), where she specialized in the Department of Genetics and Breeding. After graduating from the University in 1965, Valentina became a postgraduate student at the Zoological Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences (ZIN RAS). At ZIN, her scientific supervisors were prominent scientists, Prof. Lidia A. Chubareva (1921–2006), one of the world leaders in the field of insect cytotaxonomy (specifically, the family Simuliidae, Diptera), Head of the Laboratory of Population Genetics and Karyosystematics, and Prof. Georgy Kh. Shaposhnikov (1915–1997), a well-known expert on aphid taxonomy (Figs 2, 3). Valentina was always proud to have been their student. In May 1969, she successfully defended her PhD dissertation on “Aphid karyology and possible ways of using it in the study of their evolution, phylogeny and systematics”.



Figure 1. Valentina Kuznetsova.



Figure 2. Valentina Kuznetsova during her postgraduate studies at the Zoological Institute (from left to right: Valentina Kuznetsova with her scientific supervisor Lidia A. Chubareva and Ninel Petrova).



Figure 3. Valentina Kuznetsova during her postgraduate studies at the Zoological Institute (from left to right: Larisa Kupriyanova, Ninel Petrova, Lidia A. Chubareva, Diana Kolesova, Georgy Kh. Shaposhnikov and Valentina Kuznetsova).

Since then, Valentina's entire scientific life has been inextricably linked with the Zoological Institute, where she rose from a junior researcher to a principal researcher (Fig. 4). In 1986, she became the Head of the Department of Karyosystematics of the Laboratory of Insect Systematics, replacing Lidia A. Chubareva, and directs the work



Figure 4. Valentina Kuznetsova with her colleagues at the 175 years anniversary of Zoological Institute of RAS (2007).

of this Department to the present day (Fig. 5). In 1992, V. Kuznetsova defended her thesis for the degree of Doctor of Biological Sciences on the topic “Holokinetic chromosomes of insects, their evolution and taxonomic significance”.

Valentina Kuznetsova’s long-term scientific activity is devoted to the study of cytogenetics and, in parallel, the structure of the testes and ovaries (which are the crucial tissues for studying chromosome structure and behavior in cell cycles), the systematics and evolution of various insect orders such as Odonata, Dermaptera, Notoptera (Mantophasmatodea), Psocoptera, Hemiptera, Lepidoptera, Neuroptera, Coleoptera, Hymenoptera, and also some other invertebrates, e.g., Cnidaria, Turbellaria and Mollusca. She pays special attention to the study of insects with holokinetic chromosomes (which lack a localized centromere) using modern methods of classical and molecular cytogenetics.

Prof. V. Kuznetsova is the author and co-author of 200 scientific articles, chapters in books and collective monographs (see the List of her publications below). In collaboration with her students and colleagues, she has written a number of theoretical papers and reviews on the structure and evolution of holokinetic chromosomes, as well as on general issues of cytogenetics, molecular systematics and phylogeography of insects, including in recent years (e.g., Gokhman & Kuznetsova 2006, 2017, 2022, 2024; Lukhtanov & Kuznetsova 2010; Kuznetsova & Grozeva 2010; Kuznetsova & Aguin-Pombo 2015; Lukhtanov...& Kuznetsova 2015; Vershinina & Kuznetsova 2016; Kuznetsova et al. 2020, 2025; Shapoval... & Kuznetsova 2021, 2025; Stoianova...& Kuznetsova 2025; Golub.... & Kuznetsova 2025 etc).



Figure 5. Valentina Kuznetsova with the staff of the Department of Karyosystematics in 2019 (from left to right: Vladimir Lukhtanov, Natalia Golub, Boris Anokhin, Nazar Shapoval, Natalia Khabazova, Ninel Petrova, Alisa Vershinina).

For many years, Prof. Kuznetsova has been providing extensive scientific advice and supervising the dissertation research of domestic and foreign graduate and doctoral students (Fig. 6). Ten candidate (= PhD) and five doctoral (= habilitation) dissertations were prepared and successfully defended under her scientific supervision.

Valentina is not only a “desk scientist”. Over the years, she has actively participated in expeditions organized by the Zoological Institute to the Russian Far East, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Vietnam, and so on. She collected insects for cytogenetic research in Italy, Greece, Finland, Portugal (in particular, on the island of Madeira), Germany, Poland and Bulgaria (Fig. 7). She has worked with many colleagues in cytogenetic laboratories in various countries around the world, including Israel, Portugal, Hungary, France, Germany, Finland, Poland, Bulgaria, Georgia etc.

Along with scientific studies, Prof. Kuznetsova performs many organizational activities. For many years, she has been an expert in various scientific societies, such as, for example, the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR), The Russian Science Foundation (RSF), and the Federal Register of specialists in scientific and technical fields of education and science of the Russian Federation. She is currently a member of the Council of the St. Petersburg branch of the All-Russian Genetic Society and the Presidium of the Russian Entomological Society (Fig. 8). At ZIN, she is a member of the Postgraduate Studies Committee, and the Editorial and Publishing Council.



Figure 6. Valentina Kuznetsova with her doctoral students, Anna Maryńska-Nadachowska (Institute of Systematics and Evolution of Animals PAS, Kraków, Poland) and Snejana Grozeva (Institute of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research BAS, Sofia, Bulgaria).



Figure 7. Valentina Kuznetsova collects insects with Snejana Grozeva (left) and Anna Maryńska-Nadachowska (right).

She is the Editor-in-Chief and co-founder of “Comparative Cytogenetics” (together with another Editor-in-Chief of the journal, her former postgraduate student, now PhD, Dr. Sci. Ilya A. Gavrilov-Zimin). The journal has existed since 2007 and is indexed in the Web of Science and Scopus, which are the world’s leading abstract and citation databases for peer-reviewed literature. Besides, Prof. Kuznetsova is a member of the Editorial Boards of some other international genetic and zoological journals, e.g., “Insects”, “Genes” and “Folia Biologica (Kraków)”. Over the years of her work at the institute, she has been awarded many diplomas and titles; for example, in 2018 she was awarded the title of Honored Scientist of the Russian Federation.

However, the life of Valentina is not restricted only to science and administrative duties. She is an incredibly versatile person, keenly interested in literature and music, well informed and deeply understanding of them. Valentina has raised two wonderful sons, both of them have academic degrees, one became a famous zoologist and lecturer at St. Petersburg State University, and the other became a medical doctor and lecturer at one of the leading medical Universities in St. Petersburg. Valentina supports her sons and their families by participating in the upbringing of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Despite her incredible preoccupation with scientific and administrative matters, Valentina finds time for interesting trips, visits to natural and architectural monuments of the Leningrad Region, Karelia, and the northern and northwestern regions of Russia (Fig. 9). Incredible energy, inexhaustible interest in the world and openness to everything new fascinate everyone in her environment. Everyone who knows her emphasizes the fact that, under all circumstances, Valentina remains a deeply decent, sincere and friendly person, being an example of a true intellectual scientist.



Figure 8. Valentina Kuznetsova with her colleagues during the XII Congress of the Russian Entomological Society.



Figure 9. Valentina Kuznetsova fishes in the White Sea (June, 2025).

Friends and colleagues of Professor, Dr. Sci. Valentina Kuznetsova cordially congratulate her on a wonderful anniversary and wish her many more years of fruitful scientific activity and new achievements in the field of cytogenetics and karyosystematics, good health and good luck in everything.

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